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SUBJECT: Syrian Army, Syria/Spain, Peace Process, Lebanon, Iraq,  
Palestinian Territories (8/1)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers on August 1 featured a speech by President Asad marking the 62nd anniversary of the Syrian army's creation published July 31 in the military journal "Army of the People", in which he called for the return of the Golan Heights. He said that the latest events in the region and their repercussions have proven that Syria couldn't be intimidated by pressure and threats, stressing that the homeland rights and peoples' interests are of top priority. President Asad said "Syria insists on returning to the borders it had before June 4, 1967, when Israel occupied all of the Golan Heights during the Six Day War." The Syrian president added that the liberation of our occupied land is a sacred duty and a right guaranteed by international law. He added that "Our desire for peace does not mean that we have given up our rights." President Asad hailed the soldiers and officers of the Syrian army who defend the homeland and sacrifice their lives for the sake of the nation's dignity and liberation. He added that "Syria now is stronger than at any time in the past."

Papers also reported that President Asad's meeting on July 31 with Spanish FM Moratinos who conveyed a letter from Spanish King Juan Carlos on relations between Spain and Syria. Moratinos discussed the objectives of his current tour of the region. Moratinos stressed Syria's important and vital role in the region and pointed out that Syria is part of the solution. In a joint press conference with Spanish Miguel Angel Moratinos on July 31, Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Mouallem condemned as "dangerous" Washington's plan to sell arms packages to Gulf countries. "He who wants to make peace does not start out with an arms initiative which is dangerous for the region," Mouallem said in reference to the US administration. Mouallem also denounced the US decision to provide Israel with 25% increase in military aid, affirming that this just means that the US "is still building up its policy on the concept of the constructive chaos." But he added that Syria still "seeks to achieve security and stability in the region." Moratinos welcomed Syria's support for efforts by Spain and France to resolve the eight-month-old political crisis in Lebanon. "I am pleased to have been informed of the very constructive position of the Syrian authorities," Moratinos said following a meeting with Syrian President Asad. He said it was "good news" that Damascus was supporting efforts by the two European countries and the speaker of Lebanon's parliament, Nabih Berri, to resolve the crisis sparked by

the resignation last November of six pro-Syrian ministers. "All the political forces and parties in Lebanon are trying to find a way out of the current impasse. Parliament speaker Nabih Berri is trying to build a new platform for consensus in Lebanon," Moratinos said. He added that he would continue to "coordinate" with his French counterpart Bernard Kouchner to try to get a result before Lebanon's parliament is due to elect a new president in September.

End of summary.

## 12. Selected Headlines:

"President Assad addresses the armed forces: You must be ready at all times for every sacrifice until victory is achieved. Syria does not succumb to pressures, cannot be intimidated by threats, and cannot be lured by temptations. We are today stronger than any time before. The door is open to all possibilities and this necessitates alertness" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 8/1)

"President Asad receives a letter from Spanish King. Moratinos: Syria and Spain have always supported an international peace conference. Mouallem: He who seeks peace does not initiate an arms race" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 8/1)

"Rice and Gates in the region with a crowded schedule: 'New Iraq', anti-Syria/Iran Front, and a military-oriented peace conference" (Independent al-Watan, 8/1)

"Damascus denounces and Iran criticizes US arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states; Berlin believes that these sales contradict Washington's political rhetoric" (Independent al-Watan, 8/1)

"Abbas confirms to Putin his opposition to having dialogue with Hamas unless it apologizes" (Independent al-Watan, 8/1)

"Russian efforts to unite Palestinians" (Government-owned Tishreen, 8/1)

"Iraqi President Talabani mediates efforts to reach government reconciliation. A US marine was killed and an apache helicopter was downed in Baghdad" (Government-owned Tishreen, 8/1)

"The governing team foils Nabih Berri's initiative to solve the Lebanese crisis before the eyes of Kouchner and Moratinos" (Independent al-Watan, 8/1)

## 13. Editorial Block Quotes:

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"Rotten Goods"

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Omar Jaftali, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (8/1): "Once again the US Administration is trying to delude us into thinking that it is working for peace in the region and that the mission of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates in their current tour of the region falls within the framework of President Bush's commitment to what he has been promising since he came to office....

"...It is very obvious that they want the Arabs to fall into a new trap under the guise of peace. The aim is to normalize relations with Israel. This is what Israel clearly said when the Arab peace plan was recently presented to it.

"From this premise, Rice and Gates will promote a normalization meeting and a public relations parley, not an international peace conference. They will seek to fulfill the Israeli wishes and objectives before anything else. The region will then enter into secondary and marginal debates without any headway on the most important issue; namely, the Israeli occupation and the future of the Palestinian people, and on the number of square meters that Israel can 'give up' for the sake of 'peace'.

"It is really regrettable that some [Arabs] support this

American-Israeli inclination, justifying this by saying this is all that can be done. They call for believing an administration that has lost its political and ethical credibility, an administration whose only concern is to achieve what makes Israel comfortable, supports its arrogance and defiance of the international law and the UN resolutions, perpetuates the current Palestinian divisions, and drives the Arabs to give in and accept the Israeli status quo in everything.

"In this new mission Rice and Gates will market nothing but the same rotten goods that our region experienced over the past six years, goods that are unmarketable and that find no one to buy or even to take for free."

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"Welcoming Illusions!"

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As'ad Abbud, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (8/1): "Since President Bush announced that he would call for a peace conference on the Middle East to be held in the fall this year, many politicians and analysts have been raising more and more questions. The announcement was not coupled with any step to make people feel that the call was serious and that there was indeed an intention to move toward peace. The announcement appeared insignificant, without any momentum indicating an American desire for peace that could reach the point of applying pressure on Israel.

"The matter lacks much clarity and indeed requires waiting. It is legitimate for every human to welcome peace, but the verbal welcome

might cause another harsh case of frustration if the American call proves more of a futile public relations exercise.

"Moreover, President Bush's announcement might entail inclinations that are not only without results but also with negative results, such as the attempt to liquidate the Palestinian cause given the inappropriate prevailing situation or to put the cart before the horse in search for normalization with Israel before peace or without peace. Given the bitter experience of the Middle East peace plan with American sponsorship, and given the strong bias toward Israel by President Bush and his administration, it was natural for this announcement, which came late -- in the seventh and penultimate year of President Bush's presidency -- to be met with reservation. Welcoming peace does not mean welcoming any talk about peace; it means welcoming any words or deeds seeking a just and comprehensive peace in the region based on the legitimacy of the land-for-peace principle.

"What are they [Arab Foreign Ministers] welcoming: A new illusion, or 'classified' ads? They do not know what they are welcoming! To this date, at least, no one knows the truth, substance, and essence of Bush's initiative, which the White House itself rushed, less than 24 hours after its announcement, to say that 'we must not count much on it.'"

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"Signals of Hot Seasons"

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Ali Qasim, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (8/1): "When the United States sends its secretaries of state and defense together to the region, it means that the American agenda goes beyond the declared objectives, and the peace process alone cannot be the driving force behind this sudden interest and on this level....

"Both secretaries will work to redistribute the required roles based on a new agenda since the old agenda that Rice used to distribute in the past has failed. The fact that the defense secretary is accompanying her necessarily means that the new agenda has a military part that is no less important than the political part....

"The new agenda is linked with the announcement about new US military supplies for some of countries in the region.... Americans feel that time is running out and they, therefore, are playing their last card in the region.... The next few months, therefore, appear full of extremely dangerous developments...."

Corbin